

**Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Brown County Schools
357 E Main
Nashville, Indiana, United States 47448**

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North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

Quality Assurance Review Report

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About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

Background. Founded in 1895, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and Schools (SACS CASI) accredit public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, Latin America, and the Department of Defense Schools worldwide.

In 2006, NCA CASI, SACS CASI, and the research and development arm of the accrediting associations, the National Study of School Evaluation, unified to form AdvancED. Dedicated to advancing excellence in education, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 23,000 schools in 65 countries, serving 15 million students.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. Through AdvancED, NCA CASI and SACS CASI have defined shared, research-based accreditation standards that cross state, regional, and national boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified accreditation process designed to help schools, school districts, and educational service agencies continuously improve.

The Accreditation Process. To earn and maintain accreditation from NCA CASI or SACS CASI, school districts and their schools must:

1) Meet the AdvancED Standards and Policies for Quality School Systems. School districts demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards and policies which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for school districts to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

2) Engage in continuous improvement. School districts and their schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose that the school district is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school and district effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).

3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review. School districts and schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, school districts host an external quality assurance review team once every five years. The team evaluates the school district's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school district's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and required actions to help the school district improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school district and a written report detailing the team's required actions. The school district acts on the team's required actions and submits a progress report two years following the review.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI accreditation engages the entire school district community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help school districts and their schools maximize student success and improve organizational effectiveness

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

Purpose. The purpose of the Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Evaluate the school district's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards and policies.
2. Assess the efficacy of the district's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and required actions to improve the district and its schools.
4. Make an accreditation recommendation for review by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission.

A key aim of the Quality Assurance Review is to verify that the school district is operating with institutional integrity - that it is fulfilling its vision and mission for its students.

School District Preparation. To prepare for the Quality Assurance Review, the school district and the community complete the AdvancED Standards Assessment Report. The report engages the district in an in-depth self assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. The school district identifies and describes the evidence that demonstrates that it is meeting each standard. Through this internal review, the school district examines how its systems and processes contribute to student performance and school district effectiveness.

Summary of Team Activities. The Quality Assurance Review Team is led by an AdvancED certified District Lead Evaluator and comprised of professionals from outside the school district. The team reviews the findings of the school district's internal self-assessment, conducts interviews with representative groups of stakeholders, reviews student performance data and other documentation provided by the school district, and observes practices and daily operations. The team engages in professional deliberations to reach consensus on the school district's adherence to the standards for accreditation. The team provides an oral exit report and prepares a written Quality Assurance Review Team Report designed to help the school district and its schools improve.

The Quality Assurance Review Team Report. Following the visit, the review team completes the Quality Assurance Review report. After review by a nationally-trained reader, the report is submitted to the district. The report contains commendations and required actions for improvement.

Using the Report - Responding to the Required Actions. The school district uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school district is held accountable for addressing the required actions identified in the report. The AdvancED State Office is available to assist the school district in addressing the required actions. Following the Quality Assurance Review Team visit, the school district must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress it has made on the team's required actions. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school district is addressing the required actions.

Accreditation Recommendation. The Quality Assurance Review team uses the findings from the onsite visit to make an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is granted by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission and communicated to the school district following action from the commission.

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the NCA CASI Indiana State Office (NCA-CASI-IN), a division of AdvancED, visited Brown County Schools on 04/15/2012 - 04/18/2012.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 15 administrators, 82 teachers, 15 support staff, 28 parents and business partners, 45 students, and 5 Board of Education members for a total of 190 stakeholders. In addition to meeting with district personnel and stakeholders, the team visited 4 schools within the school district. During the school visits, team members interviewed school stakeholders, observed classrooms, and reviewed relevant school artifacts. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the district. Specifically, the team examined the district's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

1. Vision and Purpose
2. Governance and Leadership
3. Teaching and Learning
4. Documenting and Using Results
5. Resource and Support Systems
6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The AdvancED standards focus on systems with a school district and systematic methods of attaining high student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of the standards lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards. The Quality Assurance Review Team used the AdvancED standards to guide its review of the school district, looking not only for adherence to individual standards, but also for how the school district and its schools function as a whole and embody the practices and characteristics of a quality school district.

Through its examination of the school district's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team prepared reports on each standard, highlighting strengths and suggestions for improvement specific to each standard. These reports can be found following this summary.

The Quality Assurance Review Team also examined the effectiveness of the district's methods for quality assurance. The team reviewed the district's practices and methods to monitor and document improvement, provide meaningful feedback and support across the district, ensure that AdvancED standards are met and strengthened, and regularly collect, use, and communicate results. The team's findings in this area can be found following the standard reports.

The team used the standard reports and quality assurance findings to identify common themes, significant accomplishments, and pressing needs facing the district. These became the basis for the overall commendations and required actions that are provided below. The commendations and required actions should serve as the focus for the district as it acts on the team's findings. They represent the areas that the team believes will have the greatest impact in helping the district further its improvement efforts. The standard reports and quality assurance findings can be used to help reinforce and enrich the district's understanding of the commendations and required actions.

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the Brown County Schools for the following strengths and accomplishments. While additional strengths are noted in the detailed review of each standard that appears later in this report, the commendations listed below are the strengths that the team believes are most deserving of being highlighted.

Commendation 1

Commendation Statement:

The district uses a variety of methods and avenues, including an open door policy, to foster two-way communication with stakeholders.

Evidence:

The administration's open-door policy fosters an atmosphere of communication. Regular newspaper columns by the superintendent are a valuable tool in disseminating information to stakeholders. The district is also piloting an online parent information system. School and teacher newsletters are the tools that impart expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to parents. In addition to the bi-weekly newspaper column, the community-at-large receives information via personal contact with staff in the community. Presentations to local service organizations by the central office staff serve as a tool for imparting valuable information to the community. Students are proud of the district website and feel confident in it as a method of communication to stakeholders.

Rationale:

Effective two-way communication is essential to any highly functional organization. Utilizing a variety of communication methods ensures that all stakeholders who want to be informed are included.

Commendation 2

Commendation Statement:

The district implements and supports a strong fine arts program, engaging various community and regional artists in partnership.

Evidence:

Partnerships with community artisans exist with Brown County Junior High School through the visual arts department. An impressive and elaborate display of artwork, created in collaboration with the local art community, is visible in the hallways. Brown County High School taps into local musical artisans. As part of the state champion thespian program, students and community musicians collaborate as part of performance orchestra and as tutors for the band department.

Rationale:

A highly effective school district maximizes community resources to enhance learning opportunities for all students.

Commendation 3

Commendation Statement:

Support staff work in concert to promote and serve the district's vision and mission. They go beyond their job description to provide quality services in which they take great pride.

Evidence:

The support staff, including custodial, maintenance, transportation, food service, and payroll departments, and the administrative assistant, work in concert with each other to help the district fulfill its vision and mission. The Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team interviewed several members of the support staff who were passionate and serious about providing quality service to the students and employees.

Rationale:

Highly effective school districts establish and foster an environment that allows and encourages its employees to embrace the school's vision and mission and feel at liberty to go above and beyond their job description to deliver quality services that promote greater stakeholder satisfaction.

Commendation 4

Commendation Statement:

The district's vision and mission statements are student focused.

Evidence:

The language of the vision and mission statements, as well as the belief statements, core values, and district goals which accompany and actualize the vision statement, are focused on student growth and needs. A review of the wording of these statements reveals phrases such as "will prepare students" "for our students," and "the abilities of ALL children."

Rationale:

A school district which establishes and maintains a purposeful and primary focus on the needs of students will likely realize greater levels of achievement in the classrooms.

Required Actions

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following required actions for improvement. The team focused its required actions on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest impact on improving student performance and overall effectiveness of the school district. The Brown County Schools will be held accountable for making progress on each of the required actions noted in this section. Following this review, the school district will be asked to submit a progress report on these required actions. The district should refer to the detail provided in the standard reports for guidance and greater depth on the required actions.

Required Action 1

Required Action:

Assign primary responsibility for the collection, organization, maintenance and analysis of data to a single staff member and improve the focus on data analysis for systemic improvement.

Evidence:

Information provided in the improvement plans for schools and the district demonstrates that a variety of data is collected and disaggregated for analysis. The analysis appears to be useful in making instructional decisions that improving student achievement. However, a well defined process of analysis and decision making for system improvement is absent from information provided by the district. Following interviews with central office staff and building principals, the QAR team notes the lack of a warehouse for all data and specific staff that is primarily responsible for managing that database. No link to Indiana Department of Education data for Brown County can be found on the district website.

Rationale:

Organizations which base their decisions on appropriately analyzed data with the purpose of systemic improvement are more effective in meeting their intended purpose. A central responsibility for the security, distribution, and use of the data will help ensure tht process and its effectiveness.

Required Action 2

Required Action:

Provide systemically aligned professional development opportunities.

Evidence:

Research based professional development has historically been a strong focus of the district. Currently however, the professional development offerings have less of a systemic focus with limited common core literacy training and plans for high school literacy training. Interviews with staff indicate a strong value for professional development with consistent and regular opportunities for collaboration. The QAR team observed that the absence of long-range planning for professional development fosters a segmented implementation of initiatives in the schools.

Rationale:

In any highly effective organization the planned, intentional, and systemic training of its workforce is critical to achieving the desired results of significantly improving student performance and district and school effectiveness.

Required Action 3

Required Action:

Resolve email issues that limit parent/community communication.

Evidence:

The administration's open-door policy fosters an atmosphere of communication. Regular newspaper columns by the superintendent are a valuable tool in disseminating information to stakeholders. School and teacher newsletters impart school level information to parents. The district is piloting an online parent information system. However, through numerous stakeholder interviews, the QAR team learned that the district email system is currently a frustration to parents and school staff who find that filters block delivery of many legitimate emails to staff inboxes.

Rationale:

Effective two-way communication requires consistently dependable avenues. Email has evolved to be an excellent means of communication in today's world. To be open and responsive to its stakeholders, the school district must improve its email delivery system.

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools: The team reviewed the district's adherence to each of the AdvancED standards. The findings from this review are provided in the next section of this report.

Next Steps

The school district should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to maximize their impact on the school district.
3. Develop action plans to address the required actions made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the required actions.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school district's efforts to improve student performance and district effectiveness.
5. Two years following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the required actions. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the required actions. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for review and action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school district. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school district should celebrate its achievement with the community. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and other related items can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

The accreditation process engages the school district, its schools, and community in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the commendations and address the required actions noted in this report. Doing so will enable the school district to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all students.

Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the district demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The findings of the Quality Assurance Review Team regarding the standards for accreditation are summarized on the following pages.

The Quality Assurance Review Team divided into standard teams to review each standard and prepare a standards report summarizing the team's findings. These standard reports, along with the quality assurance findings that follow these reports, provided the basis for the team's identification of over-arching commendations and required actions presented earlier in this report. The reports submitted by each team are provided on the following pages for the district's review and use. Each report reflects its respective team's unique voice, perspective, and deliberations. The reports can be used to help enrich and deepen the district's understanding of the overall commendations and required actions.

Standard 1: Vision & Purpose

Standard: The system establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the system.

Description:

Brown County Schools (BCS) has maintained a vision statement and mission statement for the district for many years. It was recently revised as a function of discussions prompted by the AdvancED District Accreditation process. In that process, representatives of stakeholder groups including teachers, parents, business owners, community members, principals, district administrators and Board members were included in the deliberations and editing. Belief statements, core values, and district goals have also been created to accompany and actualize the vision statement. The vision and mission statements are student focused. The current district vision and purpose are communicated to community stakeholders and employees through the district website, posters found throughout the schools, and in the current strategic plan. The district does not have a policy or procedure in place which provides for a systematic review of the district mission statement.

A comprehensive district profile, depicting the demographics of the community, performance levels of students, uniqueness of schools, enrollment trends, descriptions of programs and services, and major trends and issues impacting the district was created as a part of the district accreditation process. The profile is prominently displayed on the district website for viewing by stakeholders and the general public.

The Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team learned through interviews that most district teachers are aware of the intent of the district vision statement. Through classroom observations in the schools, it was apparent that the vision statement generally guides the teaching and learning process.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- A comprehensive district profile is prominently displayed on the district website for viewing by stakeholders and the general public.
- The district's vision and mission statements are student focused.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Implement a board policy which will ensure a systematic review of the district vision statement on a regular basis involving staff members and community stakeholders.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Brown County Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Vision & Purpose" standard.

Standard 2: Governance & Leadership

Standard: The system provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and system effectiveness.

Description:

The superintendent, Leadership Team and the Board of Trustees meet quarterly to address and analyze issues confronting the school district. District policies and procedures are regularly reviewed during these meetings. The executive leadership authority of the position of superintendent is characterized by an open, honest, and respectful leadership style. This fosters a culture of trust and caring which is found throughout the district and community. The leadership authority is also demonstrated through leadership meetings and dialog surrounding development of curriculum, review of student achievement data, and development of administrative guidelines. Board meeting actions are communicated to all employees via an email summary of board action provided by the superintendent.

The superintendent attempts to meet with board member candidates to discuss the mission, vision and philosophy of the school district. Once elected, new board members are familiarized with their proper role through the Indiana School Boards Association new board member orientation program. The Board has adopted the Neola, Inc., policy development service as their method of establishing and maintaining board policies. This policy development services provides updates and revisions to ensure compliance with changing state and federal law. Brown County Schools has adopted the school district website as the method of communication of their board policies in order to make them readily accessible by all staff members and the general public.

The Brown County Board of Trustees and school staff members collaborate with the community groups and individuals. One specific program cited is the recent recognition by the Farm Bureau Grant for the high school's community garden project. That initiative solicited a significant number of community volunteers and provided locally grown produce to the local community kitchen. Additionally, many district personnel and stakeholders expressed pride in the financial stability of the school district.

The school district has maintained a long standing relationship with legal counsel from the neighboring community. This relationship in addition to the legal review of policies via Neola, Inc., provide for an ongoing review of legal requirements and obligations of the school system. Brown County Schools has and continues to be insured by one of the state's largest insurance underwriters, providing a protection of financial stability and insurance for its administrative operations.

Analytical processes are in place at the district level for the review of student performance data. These reviews are periodically the center focus of district-wide leadership deliberations and the board's quarterly

retreats with the Leadership Team. The Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team found evidence of a correlation between deliberations at the district level and the discussions of student performance at the individual school level. Specific evidence was linked to elementary team reviews and the intervention strategies implemented by teacher teams and the respective instructional coaches; i.e., writing coach, reading coach, math coach, and high ability coach.

Technology is the key factor in drawing the stakeholders within a network for collaborative support of curriculum development, instruction, learning targets and assessments. However, limitation of high speed internet capability in and between some school facilities was also cited as an inhibiting factor to better utilization and analysis of student data. This point was also referenced during interviews with community stakeholders with one parent citing "emails need to get worked out," (a reference to the restrictive nature of the district's technology).

Through interviews, staff members reported several examples of how the superintendent provides program direction, collaborative assistance, and resources to meet the district's organizational and student performance goals. The superintendent has led the leadership team in in-depth discussions on the process of AdvancED and the utilization of student achievement resulting in collaborative school climate.

The district has facilitated internal and external stakeholders in a meaningful collaboration within the schools' developmental and decision-making processes. Staff interviews provided evidence of stakeholder support and feeling of ownership because they believed that their input was respected and sometimes results in real change; i.e., changes in work schedules, training programs, and the feeling of respect for the support staff. Stakeholders have high expectations as indicted by their comparing of the school district's student achievement to the top ten performing schools of the state. Stakeholders also cited the need for school improvement that would be flexible and personalized to the attention of the student needs. Support for ongoing tutorial programs and after school teacher availability was presented as evidence of augmented instructional intervention.

The school district has embarked on the adoption of the recently legislative mandated teacher evaluation from the Indiana Department of Education. The RISE model, officially known as the RISE Evaluation and Development System, was developed by the Indiana Teacher Evaluation Cabinet, and includes measures of student growth and achievement as a significant factor. RISE is being adopted by Brown County Schools with modifications to meet the local needs of the community. Likewise, the recent legislative mandate requiring revised teacher evaluations is linked to newly required provisions for the compensation plan of the school district. Traditional salary schedules will no longer be accepted by the Indiana Department of Education.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The superintendent's leadership style is open and respectful, which has led to a district culture of trust and caring.
- The Board of Trustees has begun the process of board policy development and adoption utilizing a professional policy development service which will provide continual revisions of policies in the future.
- The district has corrected a long standing financial crisis created by state public policy on school funding with significant impact on Brown County Schools, enabling the district to reallocate resources to insure the attainment of the school system's vision and purpose.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Develop and implement district expectation regarding lesson plan development.
- Develop and implement protocols and expectations for the review of student data and instructional

intervention throughout the system.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Brown County Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Governance & Leadership" standard.

Standard 3: Teaching & Learning

Standard: The system provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Description:

The Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team observed classrooms in four schools in the district and verified that the curriculum was based on clearly defined expectations for student learning including essential knowledge and skills. The curriculum is reviewed and implemented at each school level. Professional learning communities, curriculum coaches, and department chairs work diligently to ensure that the state standards and grade level performance objectives are covered.

The district supports student engagement by the implementation of research-based instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that facilitate achievement for all students. The use of "What Works Clearing House," the Strategic Literacy Initiative, and the Workshop Model are just a few of the ongoing strategies. State of the art technology is available for use in classrooms, including mobile computer labs, interactive ceiling-mounted projectors, and science probeware. QAR Team members observed that the use of this equipment helped make lessons more interesting and engaging for students.

Learning expectations for students are clearly outlined for teachers within a standards-based curriculum. Specific targets for each course within a grade level are the focus of daily lessons. Daily instruction is guided by analysis on student performance data. Interdisciplinary lessons and activities, professional organization memberships, professional learning communities, and frequent focus on best practice instruction guide the way to effective instruction. State and national standards are used to develop lessons to improve student achievement and ensure that all students are prepared for the next level. Multicultural lessons and activities provide diverse learning opportunities for students. However, it was noted that no district-wide protocol was evident pertaining to individual classroom instructional planning, specifically teacher lesson plans.

All teachers from the elementary school to the high school have an opportunity to meet, discuss, and share the abilities of the students. This time is used to articulate what students are doing to prepare for the next level as well as what is required to be ready and able to perform at acceptable levels in their current placement.

A system wide climate for positive and continued growth for every student is evident in the passion and commitment exhibited by teachers when delivering instruction. Daily adjustments are made to ensure that every student is learning and reaching his/her fullest potential. Instructional time is protected and adjusted as needed and struggling students are given more time to learn during the school day as well as having before and after school tutoring opportunities available to them. Intervention processes on every grade level assist students who are struggling with academic achievement. Study Buddies, tutorials, more

time to learn, "Problem of the Day" (POD), "Flipped Classroom", and Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum are among the strategies used to promote achievement.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The passion and personal commitment shown by teachers, administrators and support staff create a positive learning environment and promote student and stakeholder respect. Parents expressed a great regard for the people that are in charge of students.
- The daily schedule in some schools has been adjusted to provide additional time during the school day for students who are struggling and require additional assistance.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Implement a district-wide protocol for the development and use of lesson plans.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Brown County Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Teaching & Learning" standard.

Standard 4: Documenting & Using Results

Standard: The system enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and system effectiveness.

Description:

Brown County Schools (BCS) maintains a comprehensive assessment system that aligns with student achievement goals. Central office administrators and building level principals report the utilization of multiple assessments to monitor student achievement, including: Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS); System to Enhance Educational Performance (STEEP); Fontas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System; Words Their Way Spelling Inventories; Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS); The Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT); Indiana Student Test of Educational Progress, Plus (ISTEP+); The ACT Explore; End of Course Assessment (ECA); and quarterly, locally developed writing prompt with locally developed rubric. Throughout the examination of documents and interviews with staff, the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team found that data is collected and examined. This analysis appears to be useful in making instructional decisions that improve student achievement. Through teacher collaboration, student assessment data is utilized to assure proper placement of students in remedial and high ability groups where instructional strategies are periodically altered as a result of a review of those data. Elementary staff members reported the use of running records as most valuable in monitoring progress of student achievement and referring students for General Education Interventions (GEI). Members of the school board and central office administration report in interviews that Brown County High School improved student achievement in algebra as a result of ECA test results analysis. In addition, new reading and writing initiatives have been implemented as a result of analysis of student achievement data at the elementary level. The success of these initiatives led to other elementary schools in the district adopting them. There is no evidence, however, that systematic analysis of data occurs to examine system effectiveness.

The QAR Team found communication of student performance data and system effectiveness to be a particular strength of Brown County Schools. Student assessment data is communicated to parents

through letters. Benchmarking results and progress monitoring data is shared with select parents as needed at monthly GEI Team meetings. System effectiveness is shared by district superintendent via bi-weekly newspaper articles, presentations to local service clubs, and online. The QAR team is concerned about the value of online communication due to reports by the district technology director that approximately 50% of homes do not have internet access. However, other central office staff indicated that families have internet access available to them through the local library, their workplace or the local Career Resource Center (CRC).

Information provided in the improvement documents of individual schools and in other district documents demonstrate that a variety of data is collected. Trend data, cohort data, student growth data and comparison data are primarily available for ISTEP+, only. The data is disaggregated into various levels for analysis. A well-defined process of analysis and decision making for system improvement is absent from information provided by the district. Following interviews with central office staff and building principals, the QAR team notes the lack of a warehouse for all data. It was noted, however, that multiple staff members have responsibilities for segments of the district's data. No link to Indiana Department of Education data for BCS can be found on the system website.

Student growth is being monitored by the district. The AdvancED Self Assessment Report includes growth data for ISTEP+ test results. In the Brown County Junior High School improvement plan, reference is made to a pre/post writing prompt which is scored with the use of a locally developed rubric. Student growth is monitored annually in this manner. Elementary school principals and district Director of Student Learning cite benchmark testing and progress monitoring with running records. This data is then being used to drive GEI meetings on individual student lack of growth. The AdvancEd team noted absence of reported growth monitoring at the high school level. The Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent serves as manager of student information systems. An electronic student data management system is utilized for keeping of records and submission of Realtime reports to the Indiana Department of Education. The Director of Technology verified the existence of an effective security system for the electronic database. All electronic student information is stored in multiple sites and is backed-up each night and housed at an off-site location. Hard copies of student records are stored in multiple locked locations.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- Brown County Schools utilizes multiple assessment tools to measure and verify student achievement.
- Student achievement data is utilized to make informed instructional decisions.
- Student assessment data is communicated to stakeholders using a variety of media.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Analyze data for the purpose of system effectiveness as part of the district improvement process.
- Organize data in a central location with a single staff member primarily responsible for collection, organization and maintenance.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Brown County Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Documenting & Using Results" standard.

Standard 5: Resource & Support Systems

Standard: The system has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Description:

Staff members from Brown County Schools attend local college interview days to recruit qualified professional staff. Also, a recruitment brochure is used to promote the district. Candidates are selected based on their professional preparation, ability, knowledge, experience, and certification to meet the needs of the district. Interviews are held by administrators and other designated staff. After a recommendation to hire is made by the building principal, a final interview is conducted by the superintendent and other district administrators. Candidates are then recommended to the School Board for approval. To support new hires, the district conducts a "New Teacher" orientation day. New staff members are also assigned a mentor. All staff members are expected to participate each year in a comprehensive program of professional development, designed and delivered primarily by the individual schools. The QAR team observed that teachers are assigned in numbers which meet state standards, conducive to effective engagement with students, and support the mission and purpose of the district. However, there is not a formal hiring process for support staff.

The district's finances are currently on solid footing following significant budget cuts and other cost-saving measures made necessary because of a recent history of inattention to fund balances and surplus accounts. On December 10, 2011, the Standard & Poor's Ratings Services assigned their AA+ long term rating to Brown County Schools. This credit rating is based on the strength and availability of funds currently available for the delivery of quality instruction. The QAR team observed an appropriate level of instructional equipment and supplies in each school visited. That observation was supported by stakeholder comments. The district has also taken advantage of general obligation bonds to fund renovations and improvements to school facilities. The district maintains appropriate safeguards for its financial transactions by way of established policies and procedures for all school treasurers and the district treasurer to follow. Annual audits are performed to verify adherence to those procedures.

The QAR team interviewed members of the support staff departments including the custodial, maintenance, transportation, food service, and payroll departments and the administrative assistant who work in concert with each other to help the district fulfill its vision and mission. Several support staff members are passionate and serious about providing quality service to the students. The food service staff member stated: "They can learn better if they have healthy meals." The custodial staff member professed that a clean building is a better learning environment. Another stated that the room temperature can be beneficial to having a contented teacher. Finally, an employee who is paid on time is a happy employee said the payroll clerk. The maintenance department has implemented a plan to strengthen the services of the department and allows for more efficient staff assignments. As a result, the district's facilities are well-maintained and clean, providing a safe and orderly learning environment for students and staff. The QAR team also interviewed the local fire chief and a state trooper who work closely with the district for advice and have been instrumental in the development of a crisis management plan and a security plan.

Several recent renovations of school sites and improvement to properties attest to the district's commitment to maintaining and improving school sites and buildings. Instructional technology is seen used in all schools, which include interactive projectors, laptops, and iPads. The QAR team observed that many students actively engaged with these devices during classroom visits. Improvements in the district's technology infrastructure is planned which will result in vastly improved service to all buildings

when all school facilities are connected by fiber optics.

The district is committed to providing a comprehensive array of services for all students. Those support services include nursing care and counseling services available in each school, nutritious breakfasts and lunches, co-curricular activities, and daily bus transportation. Additionally, each school serves a range of special needs students with cognitive, behavioral, pervasive developmental, and health issues. The district employs a licensed school psychologist who provides testing data that assists Individualized Education Plan (IEP) teams in determining the appropriate levels of service for students who have been identified. Eligible students are provided with services according to their individual need. Such services typically fall within a range of intensity including consultation, inclusive, resource, and self-contained placement options. Some support services for students are provided through collaborative efforts involving the school, the community, and the home

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- Support staff work in concert to promote and serve the vision and mission.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Provide more organized and formal human resources services for support staff employees similar to those provided to professional staff.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Brown County Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Resource & Support Systems" standard.

Standard 6: Stakeholder Communications & Relationships

Standard: The system fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Description:

Through the school improvement process, community focus groups participate in discussions concerning the district mission and vision statements and assessment of AdvancEd Standards for Quality Systems. The district has an agreement with the Career Resource Center (CRC) by which the CRC provides support services for students on a free of charge or on a for-fee basis, in addition to coordinating third party services. In return, Brown County Schools provides it with financial support and no cost facility usage. The CRC also offers various programs for vocational training to the community and serves as a source of career development for students who drop-out of school.

Brown County is home to Indiana's largest artist colony and a large population of retired residents. Partnerships with community artisans exist with Brown County Junior High School visual arts department. An impressive and elaborate display of artwork, created in collaboration with the local art community, is visible in the hallways. Brown County High School taps into local musical artisans. As part of the state champion thespian program, students and community musicians collaborate as part of performance orchestra and as tutors for the band department. Parents and school board members expect additional collaboration with these rich resources.

The administration's open-door policy fosters an atmosphere of communication and collaboration.

Regular newspaper columns by the superintendent are a valuable tool in disseminating district information to stakeholders and school and teacher newsletters impart school level information to parents. The district is piloting an online parent-information system. Initial reaction to that pilot indicates that parents and students want full implementation of the new system to improve access to student grades. The district email system, however, is currently a frustration to parents and school staff members who find that spam filters block delivery of many emails to staff inboxes. The district steering committee for AdvancED accreditation works closely with the district's leadership team. However, there is no evidence that opinions and expertise of stakeholders or faculty outside the leadership team are solicited.

School and teacher newsletters are tools that identify expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to parents. The general community receives information via the bi-weekly newspaper column and personal contact with staff in the community. Presentations to local service organizations by the central office staff serve as a tool for sharing valuable information with the community. Students are proud of the district website and feel confident in it as a method of communication to stakeholders. The QAR team noted an absence of web links to the Indiana Department of Education, which is a rich tool of information for stakeholders.

The community of Brown County maintains a feeling of involvement and ownership of the district, students, and facilities. BCS communicates meaningful and useful information to the community. This practice leads to a sense of community ownership of and pride in the district, students, and facilities. Stakeholders demonstrate knowledge of board actions, election issues, and district improvements. Student improvement data and instructional response to achievement gaps is widely known among community members. Previous financial difficulties within the district are common knowledge among stakeholders. The community is also well informed of the financial recovery process and takes great pride in that success.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- An open door policy throughout the district fosters two-way communication.
- The district uses a variety of methods and avenues to listen to and communicate with stakeholders.
- The district implements and supports a strong fine arts program, engaging community and regional artists.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Expand collaboration with the artisan and retired populations of the county.
- Evaluate the success of the piloted student information system, including the parent portal, and expand its use as soon as feasible.
- Resolve email issues that limit effective and timely parent/community communication.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional," indicating that the Brown County Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Stakeholder Communications & Relationships" standard.

Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Standard: The system establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Description:

Brown County Schools (BCS) engages in a continuous school improvement process that clearly defines the district's mission, vision, belief statements, and goals. The district maintains a current profile of the community, schools and students with data on graduation rate, school and district annual performance, standardized testing results and growth patterns. Student performance data is used to determine areas in need of intervention. The district informs stakeholders through the website, bi-weekly columns in the local newspaper, district and building-level newsletters, community focus group opportunities, and meetings of the Board of Trustees. However, interviews with stakeholders and school employees report that the involvement of stakeholders in the process of continuous improvement remains limited.

The school improvement plan for each school demonstrates alignment with the district vision and mission statements as evidenced by a review of those plans conducted by the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team. Performance data from ISTEP+, ECAs, DIBELS, ITBS, CogAT, Preliminary SAT(PSAT), SAT, ACT, STEEP, and Advanced Placement (AP) scores are used in the development of school improvement plans. The QAR team observed that the district ensures that each school's plan for continuous improvement includes a focus on increasing learning for all students. School improvement plans and processes in each building concentrate on closing gaps between current and expected student performance levels.

Research-based, professional development has historically been a strong focus of the district with professional development from Columbia University in Balanced Literacy. Currently, the professional development offerings have less of a systemic focus with limited common core literacy training and plans for high school literacy training through Reading Apprenticeship Improving Secondary Education (RAISE). Interviews with staff indicate a strong value for professional development with consistent and regular opportunities for collaboration. The QAR team observed that the absence of long-range planning for professional development has resulted in a segmented implementation of some initiatives in the schools. The restructuring of the district budget has created financial support for professional development. While sufficient budgetary support is now assured, the use of some of those funds could be approved to implement a systemic professional development plan to address instructional needs.

BCS monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders through newsletters, parent-teacher conferences, and the annual report. School personnel interviewed indicated that communication of improvement and achievement results is hindered by the current email network and internet access.

The district evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement through the school improvement plans, with each building completing thorough data analysis to inform action planning. The district strategic plan was developed as a collaborative effort involving the school board, the AdvancED Steering Committee, staff from the schools and the District Leadership team. Stakeholders were given opportunities for input through focus groups. The district strategic plan establishes goals in the areas of personnel, curriculum, finance, facilities, and information systems. The plan's timeline, however, does not consistently extend beyond the current school year.

Buildings principals report that a concerted effort is made within each school to protect teaching and planning time. Likewise, several principals have altered the traditional daily schedule to provide additional instructional time for classroom engagement. The District Leadership team meets every other week with the superintendent and directors for planning and implementation of continuous improvement efforts. Additionally, the District Leadership team meets with the School Board of Trustees quarterly throughout the year to provide support for the schools.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- Performance data is used at all levels in the development of school improvement plans.
- The district leadership, principals, and the School Board of Trustees work collaboratively at quarterly retreats for planning and ensuring continuous school improvement.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Provide systemically aligned professional development opportunities.
- Recruit stakeholders for active participation in the continuous school improvement process.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Brown County Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Commitment to Continuous Improvement" standard.

Quality Assurance Findings

The Quality Assurance Review Team examined the effectiveness of the district's methods for quality assurance. The team reviewed the district's practices and methods to monitor and document improvement, provide meaningful feedback and support across the district, ensure that AdvancED standards are met and strengthened, and regularly collect, use, and communicate results. The team provides the following findings in this area.

Description

Brown County Schools, in order to monitor and document improvement, identifies critical functions of the district and then carefully rates the level of performance for each. Those ratings are made in collaboration with appropriate stakeholders. Steps for further improvement of each function are identified and implemented. Stakeholder groups review the results of those improvement efforts, a process which continues until all stakeholders agree that the district has achieved the desired level of improvement of its performance.

The district provides meaningful support for the schools by observing instructional practices and providing feedback on the alignment of those practices with the stated vision and purposes of the district. District staff members also provide support in the analysis of student achievement data in an open and collaborative manner. Meeting all AdvancED standards at each school is ensured through open and honest communication, supporting school administrators with suggested strategies, reasonable deadlines, and modeling district adherence to the same standards.

The district regularly collects and shares information about school performance levels and the achievements of their students. That information is shared with the community through a variety of means, including the local media, the district and school websites, newsletters, and meetings.

Strengths

- The district views itself as a supportive and collaborative resource for schools in their quest for implementation of the AdvancED standards and improvement of overall effectiveness.

Opportunities

- Implement policy language or administrative procedures to ensure that annual review of the organization's effective adherence to the AdvancED standards is a central part of the culture of each school and the district.

Schools Visited

The Quality Assurance Review team visited the following schools during the visit to the Brown County Schools on 04/15/2012 - 04/18/2012.

Brown County High School	PO Box 68	Nashville	Indiana	47448-68
Sprunica Elementary School	3611 Sprunica Rd	Nineveh	Indiana	46164-9369
Van Buren Elementary School	4045 State Road 135 S	Nashville	Indiana	47448-9379
Brown County Junior High School	PO Box 578	Nashville	Indiana	47448-578

Conclusion

The commendations and required actions in this report are designed to focus the school district on those areas that will have the greatest impact on student performance and system effectiveness. While powerful in potential, the commendations and required actions only have meaning when acted upon by the school district and its schools. The strength of this report lies in the school district's commitment to using the findings to continuously improve. The key is action. The school district is encouraged to use the report as a call to action, a tool to sustain momentum in the ongoing process of continuous improvement.

The team identified required actions for improvement that the school district will need to address. Following this review, the school district will be required to submit a progress report summarizing its progress toward addressing the team's required actions.

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to the district leadership, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for hosting the review team. The team wishes the district and its students much success in the quest for excellence through NCA-CASI-IN accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dr. Edlow Barker, Chair/Lead Evaluator
- Mrs. Dawn Puckett, Vice Chair (Greencastle Community School Corp)
- Dr. Neyland Clark, Team Member (South Harrison Comm School Corp)
- Mrs. Kristin R. Tarr, Team Member (Springs Valley Elementary)
- Mrs. Debora Mayes-Love, Team Member (Detroit Cares Academy)

AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems

The AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for school districts to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness. As school districts reach higher levels of implementation of the standards, they will have a greater capacity to support ever-increasing student performance and organizational effectiveness. Each of the seven standards listed below has corresponding indicators and impact statements which can be accessed at www.advanc-ed.org.

Vision and Purpose

The system establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the system.

Governance and Leadership

The system provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and system effectiveness.

Teaching and Learning

The system provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Documenting and Using Results

The system enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and system effectiveness.

Resource and Support Systems

The system has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

The system fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The system establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.